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REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the final Office Action dated October 17, 2005. Claims 1-10, 14, 16, 17 and 19-25 were pending, with claims 2, 9 and 10 having been withdrawn by the Patent Office from consideration. Claims 11-13, 15 and 18 were previously canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer. By this Amendment, claims 2, 9, 10 and 25 have been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer, and independent claims 1 and 17 have been amended to add thereto the features recited in claim 25 (now canceled). No new matter and no new issues are introduced by this Amendment. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment is requested, and claims 1, 3-8, 14, 16, 17 and 19-24 are now pending, with claims 1 and 17 being in independent form.

Claims 1, 7, 8, 14, 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as purportedly anticipated by Japanese Patent Application Publication No. 10-329445 (Mori). Claims 3 and 20-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Mori in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,981,746 to Matsuo et al. Claims 4 and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Mori. Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Mori in view of Japanese Patent Application Publication No. JP 6-135172 (Kobayashi). Claim 19 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Mori in view of Japanese Patent Application Publication No. JP 8-332785 (Tanaka).

Applicant has carefully considered the Examiner's comments and the cited art, and respectfully submits that independent claims 1 and 17 are patentable over the cited art, for at least the following reasons.

This application is directed to a heat sensitive stencil sheet which has a porous resin layer provided on one side of a thermoplastic resin film, and a porous fiber layer bonded by an

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adhesive to the surface of the porous resin layer. The porous resin layer includes a multiplicity of walls and ceilings which define cells, and the adhesive bonding the porous fiber layer to the cell ceilings has a viscosity of 300 cps or higher.

As discussed in the application (for example, page 16, lines 12-27), a high-viscosity adhesive (that is, having a viscosity of 300 cps or higher) is preferred for bonding the porous fiber layer to the porous resin layer because such an adhesive hardly enters into the pores of the porous resin layer during and after bonding between the porous resin layer and the porous fiber layer. In contrast, if a low-viscosity adhesive is used, the low-viscosity adhesive enters and blocks the pores in the porous resin layer, and interferes with flow of printing ink through the pores of the porous resin layer. On the other hand, when an adhesive of an appropriate level of viscosity is applied to the porous fiber layer, it remains only on the surface of the porous fiber layer thus initiating the bonding without interrupting the passing-through of printing ink (as shown in electron microscope photos in Figs. 6 and 7 of the present application) resulting in point bonding (or spot-bonding).

Mori is directed to a heat-sensitive stencil master including various embodiments. Fig. 5 of Mori shows one embodiment comprising a thermosensitive film, a porous resin film and a porous fiber film disposed in this order. Mori proposes forming the porous resin film by depositing resin into a solvent and applying the solution as an aggregate-like coat on the thermosensitive film, and then applying a polyethylene adhesive to the porous fiber layer and laminating the combination to the porous resin film.

However, Applicant does not find teaching or suggestion in Mori that an adhesive having a viscosity of 300 cps or higher should be used to bond the porous fiber layer to the porous resin layer by an adhesive, as provided by independent claims 1 and 17 as amended.

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Matsuo, as understood by Applicant, is directed to a heat sensitive stencil sheet consisting of a thermoplastic film laminated through an adhesive layer on one surface of a porous support. Matsuo proposes use of an ionizing radiation-curable type adhesive which is preferably a composition that is nonfluid at normal temperature and a fluidizable liquid having a viscosity of about 500 to 2,000 cps under an elevated temperature (60°C to 100°C). Matsuo states that the preferred adhesive has the advantages of great working speed, easy lamination and excellent printing resistance and hole opening by heat.

However, Matsuo does not teach or suggest using a high-viscosity adhesive to bond a porous fiber layer to a porous resin layer, as provided by independent claims 1 and 17 as amended, nor of course the advantages of using a high-viscosity adhesive to bond a porous fiber layer to a porous resin layer.

Therefore, the adhesive proposed in Matsuo is merely one of the many adhesives known in the art. One of ordinary skill in the art would not have recognized by reading Matsuo that a high-viscosity adhesive is advantageous for bonding a porous fiber layer to a porous resin layer.

The other cited references were cited in connection with dependent claims in the present application.

Kobayashi, as understood by Applicant, is directed to a printing stencil structure including a porous base material on thermoplastic resin, with an inorganic foaming agent dispersed in the thermoplastic agent. Kobayashi was cited in the Office Action as purportedly proposing use of a foamy layer as a porous layer.

Tanaka, as understood by Applicant, is directed to a thermal stencil printing base sheet, with a wall-like film provided on one surface of a thermoplastic resin film. Tanaka was cited in the Office Action as proposing a honeycomb-shaped aggregate of cells in the wall-like film.

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Applicant does not find disclosure or suggestion in the other cited art, however, of a heat sensitive stencil sheet which has a porous resin layer provided on one side of a thermoplastic resin film, and a porous fiber layer bonded by an adhesive to the surface of the porous resin layer, wherein the adhesive bonding the porous fiber layer to the porous resin layer has a viscosity of 300 cps or higher, as provided by independent claims 1 and 17 as amended.

In view of the amendments to the claims and remarks hereinabove, Applicant submits that the application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant earnestly solicits the allowance of the application.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees that may be required in connection with this response and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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